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Ex-Green Beret Tells of Being recruited for Libya

HONOLULU, Aug. 26 (AP) — A former master sergeant with the U.S. Army Special Forces says a man passing out \$100 bills "like Green Stamps" recruited him and other ex-Green Berets to go to Libya four years ago to train terrorists.

Retired Master Sgt. Luke F. Thompson said in an interview at his home here last night that he went along with the plan mistakenly thinking it was an operation engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Today he's confused and scared.

Federal authorities "won't talk to me or tell me where I stand," he said.

Thompson said he was on active duty with a Special Forces unit at Fort Bragg, N.C., when he was recruited to form a small band of former Green Berets to undertake a special mission that would result in "big money."

Suspecting he was being recruited by a foreign power, Thompson said

he immediately contacted U.S. counterintelligence officials. He was told to play along to see what would happen.

The operation actually was set up by Edwin P. Wilson, a former CIA agent who was indicted last year on charges of illegally shipping explosives to Libya. The New York Times reported today.

Wilson, a fugitive believed to be living in Tripoli, had a deal with Libya's leader, Col. Muammar Qaddafi, to supply and train terrorists, according to federal authorities.

The first Green Beret contingent, including Thompson and three former members of the outfit, traveled to Libya late in July, 1977, where they briefed Libya's intelligence chief, Abdul-Senussi, the Times said.

Thompson said his first contact came from a man who identified himself as Pat Loomis in a series of telephone calls that began July 21, 1977.

The next day he met with Loomis and a man named Ken Conklin at a

motel in Fayetteville where Loomis identified himself as a CIA agent getting ready to leave the agency after "coming out of deep cover in Indonesia with the aircraft industry."

Loomis asked him to recruit four or five others who had the expertise of a Special Forces A Team, meaning a team capable of handling virtually any assignment, Thompson said.

Thompson said he checked with his counterintelligence contacts and was told, "We can find nothing wrong with this operation. It's completely legal and aboveboard. Go ahead as you desire."

Loomis then directed Thompson to get his team together and travel to Washington, D.C., for another meeting, bringing along all the personnel and equipment that would be needed, Thompson said, indicating some of that equipment included weapons.

He said he told Loomis at the time that he was keeping the counterintelligence people informed on

the operation and Loomis responded that was "no problem."

Thompson said his commanding officer at Fort Bragg apparently had been contacted and asked to cooperate and even arranged for Thompson to take an extended leave.

When Thompson and three of his recruits arrived in Zurich they were met by Wilson, who offered them \$6,500 a month plus a \$10,000 bonus, along with \$250,000 in life insurance, he said.

It was then that the group learned their destination was Tripoli and their employer the Libyan government, Thompson said.

Thompson said he returned to the United States after some initial meetings in Libya. "After all, I was on active duty and assigned to work in the intelligence community," he said. "If they [the Libyans] found that out, I could have been shot as a spy."

Thompson said he later was ordered to testify before a federal grand jury about his involvement.